

STUDENT-PARENT DATA COLLECTION ACT ANNUAL REPORT



Illinois Board of Higher Education
June 2025

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Student-Parent Demographics & Prevalence

- Student-Parents constitute 2.8% (N=3,466) of undergraduates (Total=123,770).
- The Student-Parent population is predominantly female (77.3%).
- 80.3% of Student-Parents are adult learners aged 25 or older, compared to 7.1% of non-Student-Parents.
- African American students are overrepresented among Student-Parents (26.9%) compared to non-Student-Parents (15.0%).

Marital Status

- Student-Parents are significantly more likely to be married (22.7%) or widowed or divorced (5.1%) compared to their non-parent peers.
- Male Student-Parents have a slightly higher rate of marriage at 26.6%, closely followed by female Student-Parents at 22.3%.
- Non-Student-Parents have a higher rate of not been married (49.9%), in contrast to only 31.0% of Student-Parents.

Enrollment Patterns

- Student-Parents have a significantly higher rate (41.5 percentage points) of part-time enrollment (49.5%) compared to non-Student-Parents (8.0%).
- Despite varied enrollment intensity (certificate, associate's degrees), a high percentage of Student-Parents (98.0%) are enrolled in bachelor's programs, similar to non-Student-Parents (98.7%).

Financial Profile & Aid

- Student-Parents demonstrate a greater reliance on financial aid, with 20.9+ percentage points (69.6%) receiving Monetary Award Program (MAP) grants, compared to 48.7% of non-Student-Parents.

Academic Outcomes (First-Time, Full-Time Cohort)

- For first-time, full-time students, the mean GPA for student-parents was 1.59, which is lower than non-parents (2.88) and the mean GPA of non-FAFSA filers (3.11).
- The fall-to-spring retention rate for these student-parents was 60.8%, significantly lower than for non-parents (86.9%) and non-FAFSA filers (82.4%).
- It is important to note that traditional metrics focused on first-time, full-time students may not adequately represent the experiences of the broader Student-Parent population, which includes a substantial number of part-time and transfer students.

Childcare and University Distribution

- The representation of Student-Parents varies considerably among institutions, ranging from 0.2% at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) to 23.4% at Chicago State University (CSU).
- Although most Illinois public universities provide on-campus or affiliated childcare centers, these facilities predominantly serve children whose parents are not currently enrolled students. Eastern Illinois University (EIU) is the only public university without an on-campus childcare center.

Data Collection, Limitations, and the "No FAFSA" Group

- The primary source of data is the FAFSA, which has inherent limitations. This methodology excludes students who do not file a FAFSA, such as international students, DACA recipients, and students from higher-income families, potentially leading to an underestimation of the Student-Parent population.
- A significant portion of undergraduates (25.9%, or 32,101 individuals) are in the "No FAFSA or Missing" category. This group is larger than the identified Student-Parent population and may include uncounted Student-Parents.
- This report advocates for broader identification strategies beyond FAFSA to ensure all Student-Parents are identified and supported.

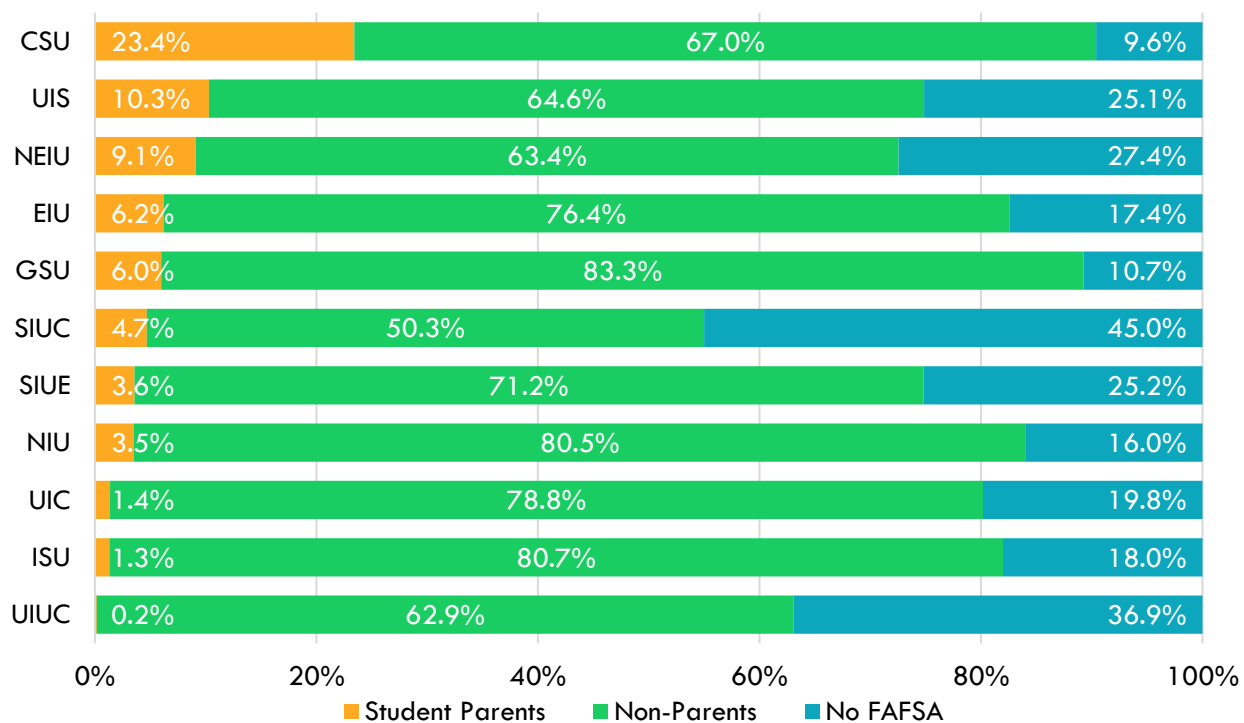
Introduction

Each year, the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) publishes a report on the experiences of students who are also parents to learn about their successes, challenges, and differences to better understand how best to serve this lesser-known undergraduate population. This third consecutive report provides a detailed profile of Student-Parents across all 12 Illinois public universities, using data from the 2023-24 academic year. Building on valuable insights from previous reports in 2022 and 2023, this edition continues to explore the key differences in demographics, financial needs, and academic profiles among Student-Parents, their non-parent peers, and students who did not file a FAFSA. In fulfilling the mandate of the [Student-Parent Data Collection Act \(110 ILCS 149\)](#), this document confirms the full compliance of Illinois public universities in providing the required data. This year's report includes baseline information, details on university-affiliated childcare, and new data points such as marital status. The analysis continues to show that Student-Parents are a distinct population compared to other students across several key characteristics.

Undergraduate Student-Parents by Illinois Public University

Across Illinois public universities, Student-Parents constitute 2.8% of the undergraduate population based on FAFSA responses, though this percentage varies widely by institution (see: [Appendix 2](#)). Chicago State University (CSU) reports the highest proportion of Student-Parents at 23.4%, while the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) has the lowest at 0.2%. Other universities, such as the University of Illinois Springfield (UIS) and Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU), have notable Student-Parent populations of 10.3% and 9.1%, respectively. The data also reveals significant variations in the number of students who do not submit a FAFSA, with 45.0% of students at Southern Illinois University Carbondale (SIUC) and 36.9% at UIUC falling into this category.

Figure 1. Distribution of Fall 2023-24 Undergraduates by Student-Parental Status

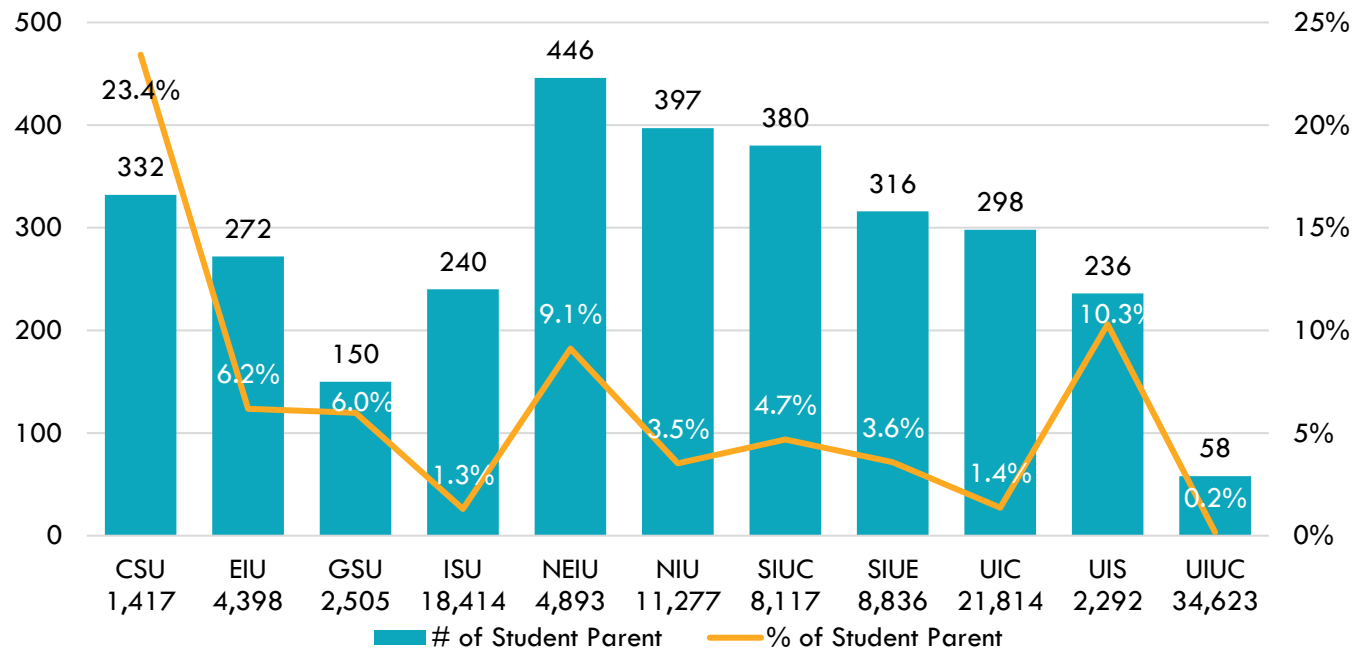


*WIU is not included in this chart. See: [Methodology](#).

Figure 2 provides information on the number of student parents at each of the Illinois public universities relative to the overall number of undergraduate students. Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU) had the greatest number of undergraduate student parents across the Illinois public universities at 446, followed by NIU at 397, and Southern Illinois University Carbondale (SIUC) at 380. UIUC had the fewest student parents at 58 followed by Governor

State University (GSU) at 150. NEIU was among the Illinois public universities with both the highest number and the highest concentration of student parents. UIUC and GSU were among the public universities with the lowest number and lowest concentrations of undergraduate student parents. Total undergraduate enrollment for each Illinois public university is provided for additional context on the size of the overall undergraduate student body.

Figure 2. Number of Undergraduate Student-Parents by Illinois Public University

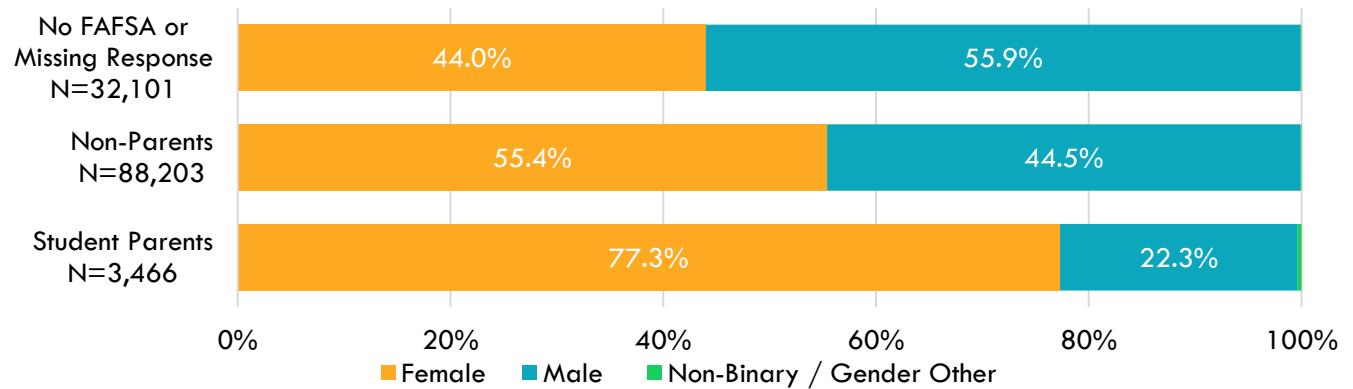


*WIU is not included in this chart. See: Methodology.

Gender Distribution of Student-Parents

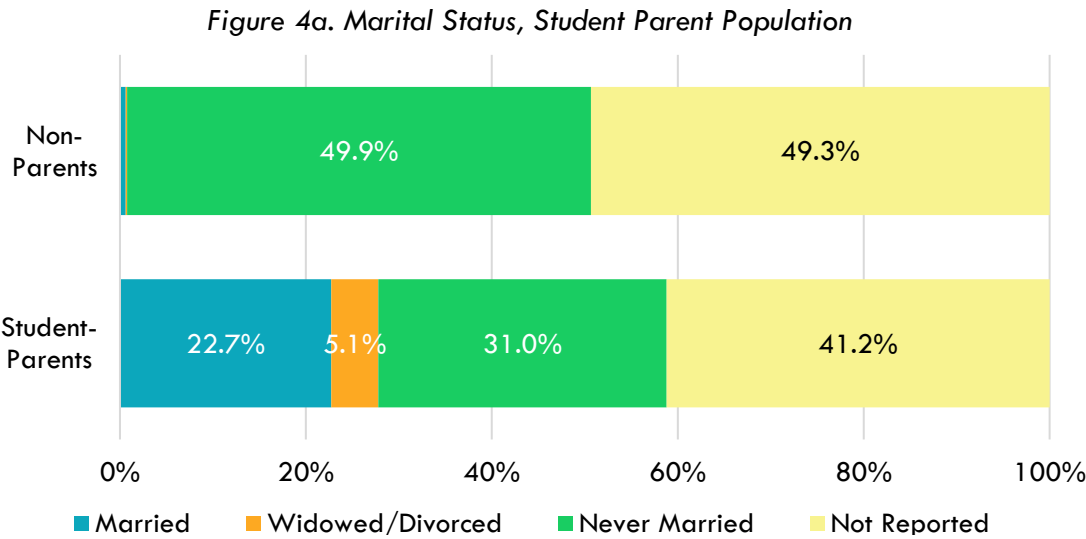
Across the 12 Illinois public universities, there were 3,466 Student-Parents, 88,203 non-parents, and an additional 32,101 individuals without a FAFSA or with a missing response on the FAFSA (parental status could not be determined). The data reveals a notable gender distinction across the student population, with women consistently representing a higher proportion than men. Specifically, the number of female Student-Parents is 2,679, while the number of male Student-Parents is 774; women constitute 77.3% of the Student-Parent group, compared to 22.3% for men. This may suggest that female students are more likely to have parental responsibilities than male students or even as a reflection of broader demographics, perhaps men who are parents may be less likely to be enrolled in college. Among non-Student-Parents, the gender distribution shows women representing a larger share (55.4%) than men (44.5%). Similarly, in the group with no FAFSA data or missing information, women account for 44.0%, while men account for 55.9%. The number of students identifying as Non-Binary/Gender Other is very small across all categories.

Figure 3. Student-Parent Status by Gender

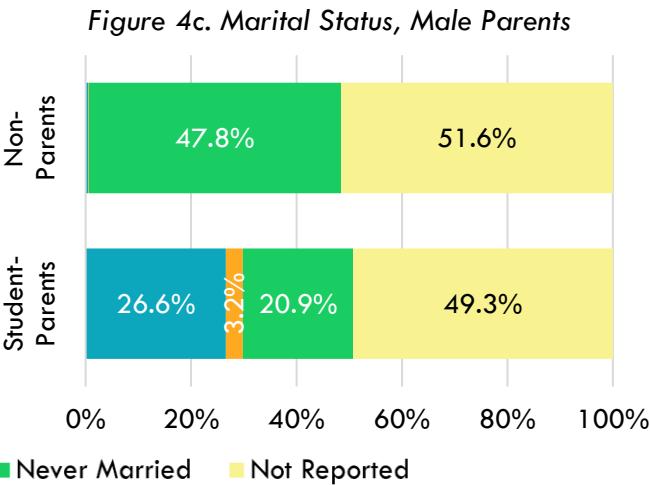
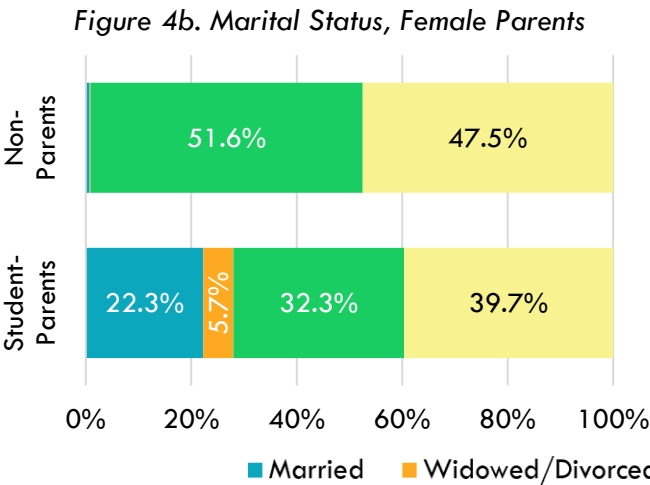


Marital Status of Student-Parents

The data reveals the following trends regarding the marital status of Student-Parents (total N=3,124). A significant proportion of Student-Parents (22.7%) are married (710 students). A smaller percentage declared themselves (5.1%) widowed or divorced (158 students). A significant percentage (31.0%) of Student-Parents have never been married (969 students). This figure represents a significant group of students navigating the complexities of parenthood and schooling potentially without the support of a spouse. A notable 41.2% of Student-Parents had their marital status as Not Reported/No FAFSA/Missing (1,287 students).



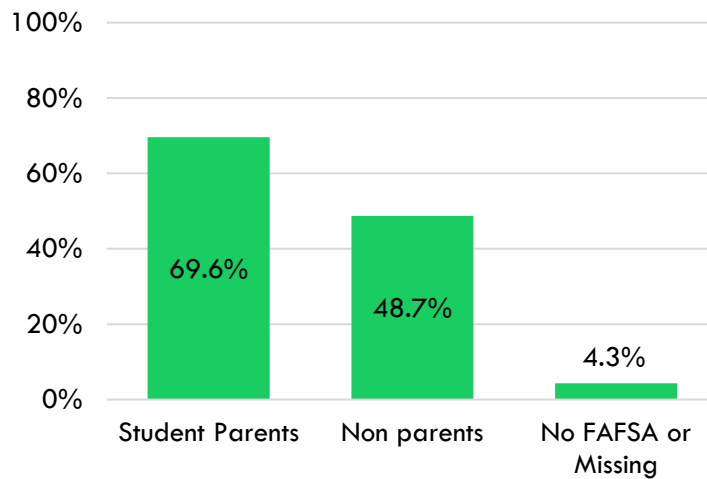
Among female Student-Parents (N=2,368), 22.3% are married (527 students), while 5.7% are widowed or divorced (136 students), and 32.3% have never been married (766 students). Similarly, with male Student-Parents (N= 684, more than a quarter of them (26.6%) are married (182 students), while 3.2% are widowed or divorced (22 students). A sizable portion (20.9%), like with female Student-Parents, have never been married (143 students).



Student-Parents Receiving Financial Aid

During the fall semester of the 2023-24 academic year, 2,412 Student-Parents received MAP grants, compared to 42,922 non-Student-Parents. In total, 69.6% of all Student-Parents received a MAP grant, a significantly higher proportion than the 48.7% of non-Student-Parents who received the same aid. This highlights the greater financial need within the Student-Parent community.

Figure 5. MAP Receipt and Student-Parent Status

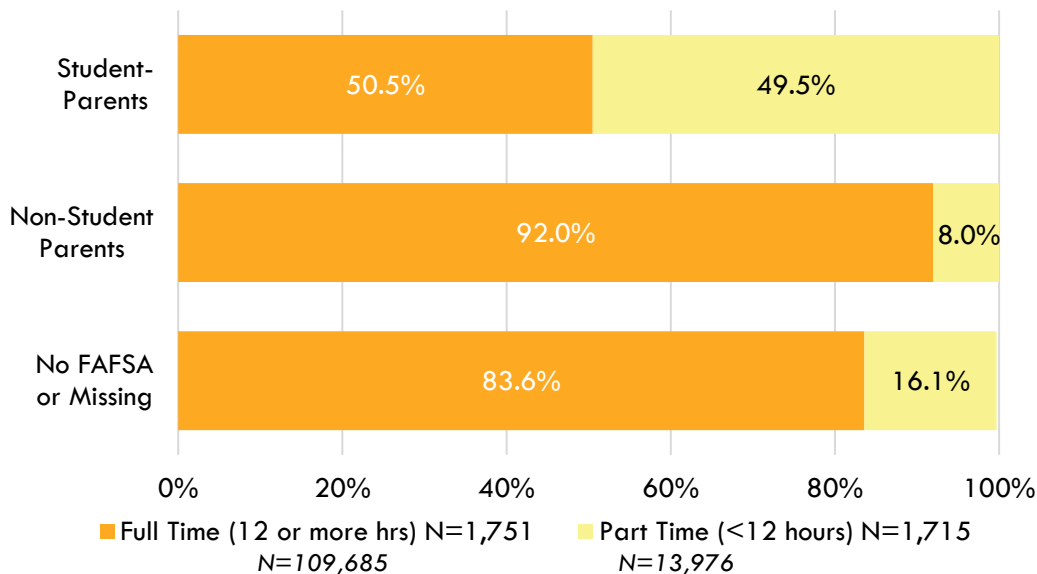


Enrollment Intensity of Student-Parents

As shown in Figure 6, there are notable differences in enrollment intensity between Student-Parents, non-Student-Parents, and students with no FAFSA filers. Among Student-Parents, 1,751 are enrolled full-time (FT), and 1,715 are enrolled part-time (PT). Not surprisingly, non-Student-Parents show a strong inclination towards full-time enrollment, with 81,112 students FT, while 7,091 are enrolled PT.

For students with no FAFSA or missing information, 26,822 are enrolled FT, and 5,170 are enrolled PT. The percentages further highlight this disparity: 50.5% of Student-Parents are enrolled full-time, compared to 92.0% of non-Student-Parents and 83.6% of those with no FAFSA or missing information. This suggests that non-Student-Parents are more likely to pursue their education full-time, while Student-Parents are more evenly split between full-time and part-time enrollment.

Figure 6. Enrollment Intensity by Student-Parent Status

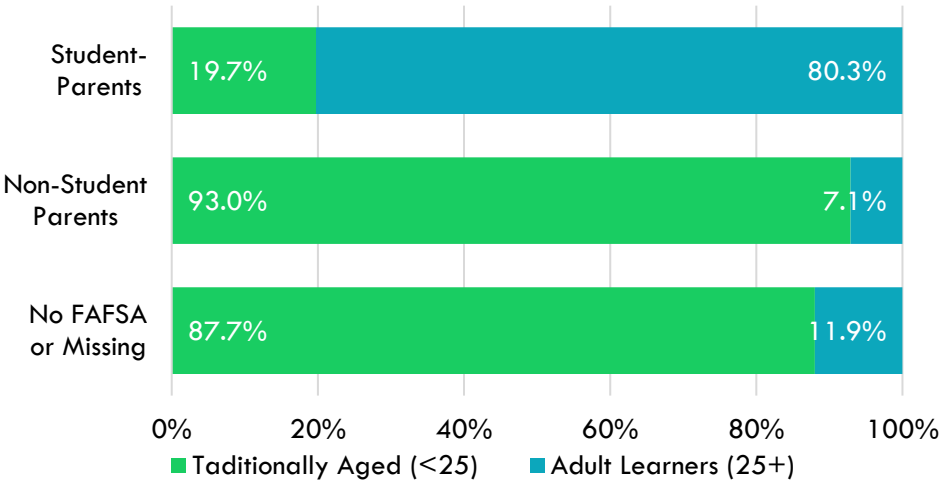


Student-Parents as Adult Learners

The age distribution of students reveals a stark contrast between Student-Parents and their non-parenting peers. Student-Parents at Illinois public universities are overwhelmingly adult learners, with 80.3% aged 25 or older. Conversely, non-Student-Parents are predominantly of traditional college age, with 93.0% under the age of 25.

This data indicates that Student-Parents are significantly more likely to be older than the traditional college-age population, suggesting that factors like childcare responsibilities or delayed entry into higher education may influence their enrollment patterns.

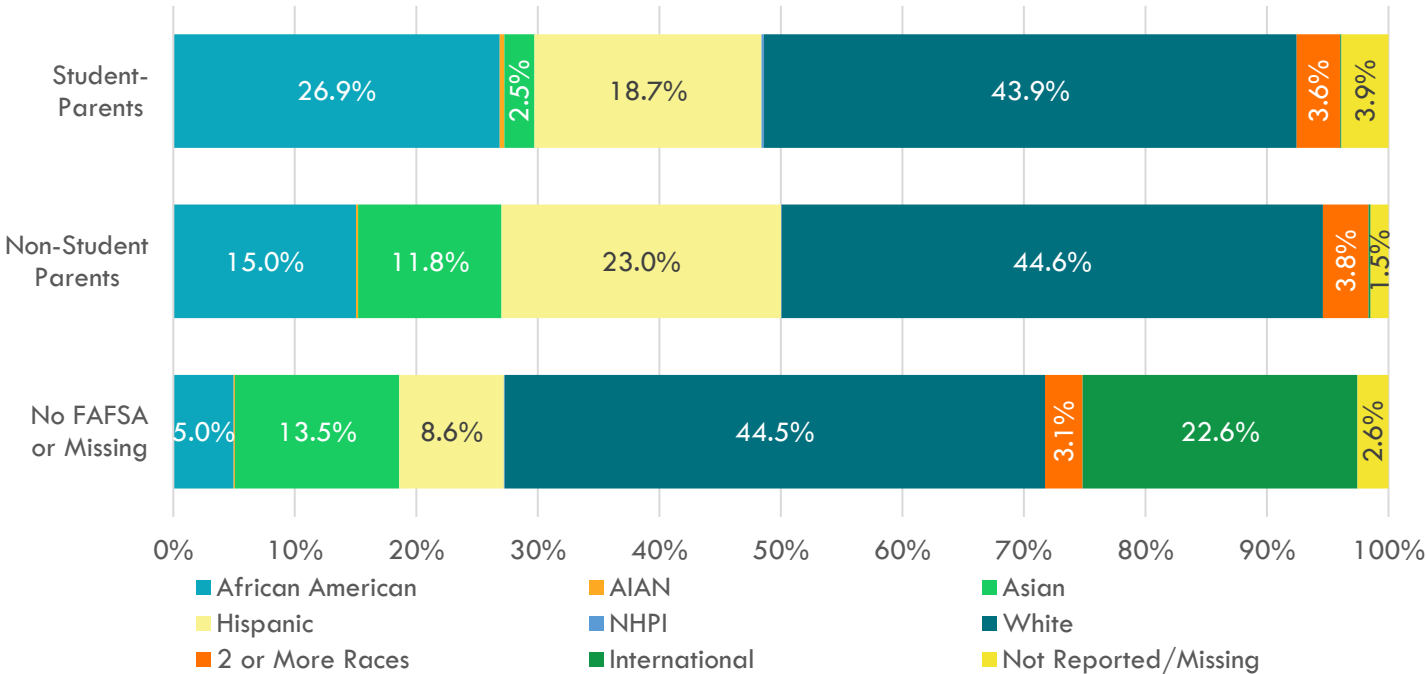
Figure 7. Age by Student-Parent Status



Race/Ethnicity Distribution of Student-Parents

The racial and ethnic composition of Student-Parents and other students reveals distinct patterns based on Figure 8. Among Student-Parents: White students comprise 43.9%, African American/Black students make up 26.9%, and Hispanic students represent 18.7%. In contrast, non-Student-Parents show a distribution with White students at 44.6%, Hispanic students at 23.0%, and African American/Black students at 15.0%. Across all categories, Asian students represent varying fractions: 2.5% of Student-Parents, 11.8% of non-Student-Parents, and 13.5% of students with no FAFSA or missing information. Notably, Student-Parents have a higher percentage of African American students compared to non-Student-Parents. In almost all cases, international students do not qualify for Pell grants and, therefore, would not typically file the FAFSA. The "No FAFSA or Missing" group has 22.6% international students.

Figure 8. Race/Ethnicity by Student-Parent Status



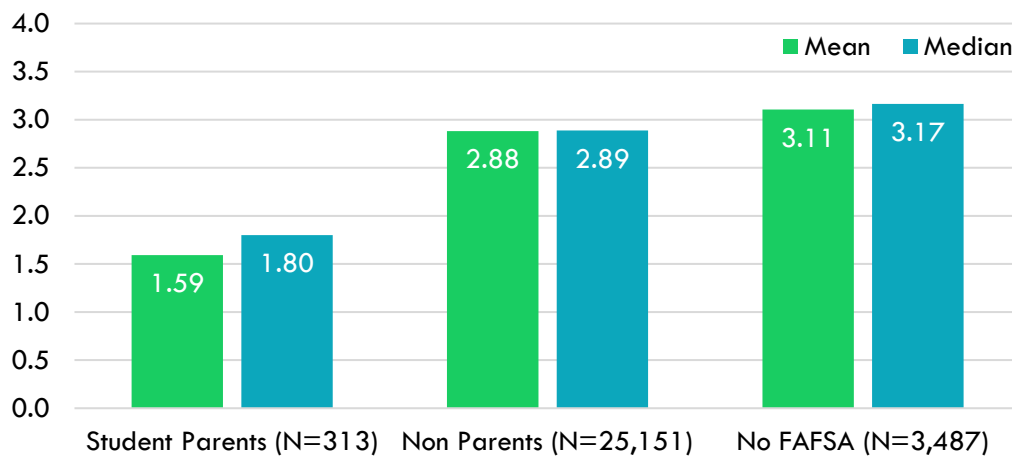
Note: AIAN – American Indian or Alaskan Native; NHPI – Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander

ACADEMIC OUTCOMES OF STUDENT-PARENTS

The following measures are based on first-time, full-time undergraduate students and serve two purposes. The information points to potential academic struggles of Student-Parents as a group and, at the same time, demonstrates how using traditional cohort measures focusing on first-time, full-time students misses a large proportion of this population, as there were 313 first-time, full-time Student-Parents enrolled in the fall semester of academic year 2023-24 across all 12 Illinois public universities according to data. This suggests the need for additional outcome measures that focus on part-time and transfer students to better capture success measures for this non-traditional student population.

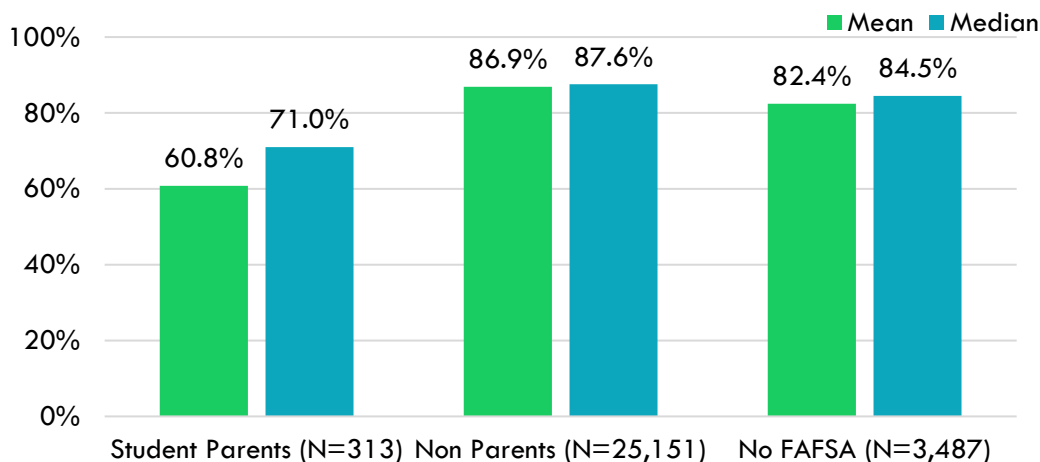
Data indicates that Student-Parents among the first-time, full-time cohort had notably different academic outcomes compared to their peers. The mean grade point average across the 12 Illinois public universities for these Student-Parents stood at 1.59, while for non-parents the mean was 2.88, and for undergraduate students not filing the FAFSA (or with missing FAFSA) the mean was 3.11. The median demonstrates that ‘outlier’ universities can push the averages up (The U of I system is an example).

Figure 9. Both Mean & Median GPA by Student-Parent Status for Illinois Public Universities



Student-Parents, among the first-time, full-time cohort, had lower retention rates than their peers. The fall to spring retention rate for new FT/FT student parents was 60.8%, for non-Student parents it was 86.9%, and for non-FAFSA filers it was 82.4%, as shown in Figure 10. Once again, the number of individuals in the first-time, full-time population, which is traditionally used for tracking retention, was relatively small among Student-Parents (N=313), though larger than previously reported.

Figure 10. Fall to Spring Retention by Student-Parent Status for Illinois Public Universities



CHILDREN OF STUDENT-PARENTS SERVED BY ON-CAMPUS CHILDCARE CENTERS

All the Illinois public universities have a childcare center or an otherwise affiliated childcare center except EIU. Most recently, CSU opened its on-campus childcare center and started providing childcare services in the spring semester of academic year 2021-2022.

Although all the centers served children of Student-Parents, most of the children being served are not children of currently enrolled students. SIUC served the most children (based on fall semester) by a considerable margin at over 261, followed by UIUC (149), GSU (120), and NIU (104). Based on fall semester information, NIU (24), SIUC (28), SIUE (21) and UIUC (24) served the greatest number of children of Student-Parents with the highest proportion of children of Student-Parents being 29.4 - 33.3%.

Table 1. Children Served at Childcare Facilities by Illinois Public University

Institution	# of Children Served at childcare facilities	# of Children of Student Parents Served	# of Children Served at childcare facilities	# of Children of Student Parents Served
IL Public University†	Fall		Spring	
CSU	18	1	18	1
GSU	120	4	109	8
ISU	18	4	19	4
NEIU	62	9	60	7
NIU	104	24	107	26
SIUC	261	28	276	31
SIUE	77	21	78	22
UIC	34	10	43	14
UIS	68	4	74	4
UIUC	149	24	149	24
WIU	21	7	20	6
Total	932	136	953	147

*EIU reported not having an early childhood center on campus during the reporting period

CONCLUSION

This report on the 2023-2024 academic year continues to shed light on the educational pathways of student-parents across Illinois public universities. We see a resilient community, largely comprised of women and adult learners over 25, who are far more likely to enroll part-time while balancing their studies with family life. Their significant financial need is clear, with nearly 70% relying on MAP grants. However, the traditional metrics for first-time, full-time students show concerning hurdles, including a 1.59 mean GPA and a 60.8% retention rate – which indicate these standard measures may not fit this non-traditional population.

Looking ahead, our most critical challenge is recognizing who we might be missing. The reliance on FAFSA for data is a significant limitation. The fact that over a quarter of all undergraduates (25.9%) are in the "No FAFSA or Missing" category – a group larger than our entire known student-parent population – suggests our current picture is incomplete. This isn't just a data gap; it means we are likely underestimating the true need for vital resources like accessible childcare, flexible scheduling, and targeted financial support.

For the next report, the goal must be to see the full picture. It is essential to develop the broader identification strategies advocated for in this analysis, such as integrating voluntary self-identification questions into university registration systems. Furthermore, we must create new success metrics that better reflect the reality of part-time and transfer students. By ensuring all student-parents are seen and understood, we can better provide the equitable support they need to thrive academically and strengthen their families.

APPENDIX A. DATA COLLECTION & METHODOLOGY

IBHE captured the Student-Parent information for academic year 2023-24 through its Illinois Higher Education Information System (IHEIS) enrollment collection, affording the Illinois public universities enough time to send in the data.

One of IBHE's core data collection principles is to rely on existing data sources that are uniformly collected when and where possible. FAFSA is still mainly used as a main source of information, to meet some of the reporting requirements set forth in the [Student-Parent Data Collection Act \(110 ILCS 149\)](#).

The FAFSA question was specific to the prior academic year and included the following language: *Do you now have, or will you have children who will receive more than half of their support from you between July 1, 2023, and June 30, 2024 (Y/N)?*

The information is collected during an established process with potentially high stakes results as the information provided on the FAFSA is used to determine eligibility for Pell grants. Therefore, it would be in the student's best interest to provide accurate and complete information.

Also, the information reported through the FAFSA is updated annually, which aligns with the dynamic nature of what it means to be a Student-Parent. In other words, being a Student-Parent is not static and may change as someone progresses through their undergraduate years. To maintain Pell eligibility, an undergraduate and eligible student would be required to file the FAFSA each year.

IBHE follows the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) process for collection of single-parent status data that aligns with Perkins reporting purposes. IBHE and ICCB utilize the following codes: 0 – Not a Parent (nor a pregnant individual); 1 – Single Parent (includes single pregnant individuals); 2 – Married Parent (includes married pregnant individuals); 9 – Unknown (For use only for reporting FY 2022 data and should be used sparingly).

There are some inherent limitations associated with using the FAFSA that should be noted: 1) it is limited to individuals who file the FAFSA and, therefore, would not include international students who are not eligible for federal financial aid, DACA students, and wealthier students who do not file the FAFSA because they assume that they would not qualify for federal financial aid; 2) it is also limited to undergraduate students and would, therefore, not include graduate or professional students; and 3) the questions on the FAFSA may be streamlined, and the Student-Parent questions could potentially be eliminated as the FAFSA is updated in future iterations.

After discussions with the Illinois public university institutional research and planning directors and national advocates and experts, IBHE has met the reporting requirements set forth in the legislation as described below.

Year 1 (academic year 2021-22, reflected in the first report): IBHE collected FAFSA-derived survey information from the Illinois public universities with the legislatively required disaggregation and outcome metrics. The way the information was being collected would have identified any potential limitations of using the FAFSA as the source. The general idea was that the information provided to IBHE by the Illinois public universities would include information on the FAFSA coverage among undergraduates. This, in turn, would provide IBHE some insight into using the FAFSA as a temporary solution.

Year 2 (academic year 2022-23, reflected in the second report): IBHE continued to collect FAFSA-derived survey information from the Illinois public universities in an aggregate report as plans were developed and executed to collect the same information at the student-level in future years.

Year 3 (academic year 2023-24, reflected in the current report): The public universities will be required to provide IBHE with the Student-Parent and marital status information from the FAFSA at the student-level through IBHE's Illinois Higher Education Information System (IHEIS) enrollment collection. Due to significant institutional challenges, Western Illinois University (WIU) was for the most part not included in the main analysis of this 2023-24 report. WIU did comply with Daycare Center Data.

Compliance with Section 15

All the Illinois public universities were in full compliance with Section 15 by sake of reporting the headcount usage of on-campus and university-affiliated childcare facilities in the fall and spring semesters in addition to the number of children of currently enrolled students being served. The submission of this information by the Illinois public universities occurred on or before July 1, 2024, as mandated in the legislation.

The information collected specific to Section 15 established that all the Illinois public universities have some sort of childcare center or an otherwise affiliated childcare center except for EIU.

Compliance with Section 20

IBHE considers this information as fully meeting the statutorily defined reporting requirements but also provided insight into the efficacy of using information partially sourced from the FAFSA to respond to the legislatively mandated reporting requirements. Over 75% of undergraduates at Illinois public universities had filed a FAFSA and responded to the Student-Parent question. Except for WIU, all the Illinois public universities were in full compliance with Section 20 of the legislation by reporting the required information to IBHE on or before July 1, 2024.

The Importance of Addressing "No FAFSA or Missing" Data for Supporting Student Parents

The data for AY 2023-24 reveals a substantial number of undergraduate students – 32,101 individuals, or 25.9% of the total undergraduate population at Illinois public universities – are categorized as "No FAFSA or Missing". This group is significantly larger than the identified Student-Parent population (3,466 students). While the FAFSA is a primary tool for identifying student parents eligible for federal aid, its limitations mean that a cohort of student parents may remain uncounted and potentially underserved.

Several characteristics of the "No FAFSA or Missing" population warrant a closer examination to ensure all student parents are included in the reports. It is worth noting that 22.6% of Student-Parents are international students and are generally ineligible for FAFSA. The majority (over 77%) are domestic students. The reasons for not filing or having missing FAFSA data may be varied, perhaps due to childcare issues, downtime, and work challenges.

Indicators of Potential Student Parents:

1. **Adult Learners:** Within the "No FAFSA or Missing" category, 11.0% are adult learners aged 25 or older. While this is lower than the 80.3% among identified student parents, it is higher than the 7.1% among non-Student parents, suggesting a notable presence of older students who could have parenting responsibilities.
 - **Part-Time Enrollment:** 16.1% of students in this group are enrolled part-time. Part-time status can be indicative of students balancing academic pursuits with external commitments, such as work or family care, including parenting. This rate is substantially higher than that of non-Student parents (8.0% part-time).
 - **Underestimation of Need:** Relying solely on FAFSA data to identify student parents inevitably leads to an undercount. Consequently, the true scale of need for resources critical to Student-Parent success – such as affordable and accessible childcare, flexible academic scheduling, family housing, and targeted financial support beyond federal aid – may be underestimated.
2. **Call for Broader Identification Strategies:** To create a genuinely supportive environment for all student parents, Illinois higher education institutions should consider and implement supplementary methods for identification. These could include:
 - Voluntary self-identification questions integrated into university registration or student information systems.
 - Targeted outreach and surveys to students exhibiting characteristics common among student parents but who are not captured by FAFSA data.
 - Raising awareness about available campus supports for student parents and making these resources easily discoverable for all students, regardless of FAFSA status.

3. **Ensuring Equitable Support:** Understanding the full scope of the Student-Parent population, including those potentially within the "No FAFSA or Missing" cohort, is vital. It allows institutions to design and allocate resources more equitably and effectively, ultimately contributing to increased persistence, degree completion, and the well-documented intergenerational benefits that arise when parents achieve higher education.

By proactively seeking to understand the circumstances of students in the "No FAFSA or Missing" category, IBHE and Illinois public universities can better ensure that all student parents have the opportunity to thrive academically and achieve their educational goals, thereby strengthening families and communities across the state.

APPENDIX B. STUDENT PARENT DATA

Table B1. All Degree/Certificate Seeking Undergraduate Students from the Fall Semester, Academic Year 2023-24

	Student Parents	Non-Student Parents	No FAFSA
#Overall	3,466	88,203	32,101
#Gender Male	774	39,258	17,933
#Gender Female	2,679	48,883	14,125
#Gender Non-Binary/Gender Other (if available)	0	0	0
#Gender Missing/Not Reported	13	62	43
#Received MAP in Fall of AY2021-22	2,412	42,922	1,386
#Race/Ethnicity African American/ Black	932	13,274	1,594
#Race/Ethnicity American Indian, Alaska Native	13	151	34
#Race/Ethnicity Asian	86	10,407	4,340
#Race/Ethnicity Hispanic	648	20,290	2,762
#Race/Ethnicity Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander	7	55	22
#Race/Ethnicity White	1,521	39,296	14,269
#Race/Middle Eastern, North African (MENA)	0	0	0
#Race/Ethnicity 2 or More Races	124	3,313	994
#Race/Ethnicity Non Resident Alien	4	153	7,260
#Race/Ethnicity Not Reported/ Missing	134	1,297	819
#Enrollment Intensity FT (12 or more hours)	1,751	81,112	26,822
#Enrollment Intensity PT (<12 hours)	1,715	7,091	5,170
#Age at Fall Census Date <25	684	82,052	28,159
#Age at Fall Census Date 25+	2,782	6,273	3,833
#Program Level 5 (Bachelor's)	3,398	87,076	31,377
#Program Level 4 (2-4 year certificates)	0	1	1
#Program Level 3 (Associate)	1	186	143
#Program Level 2 (1-2 year certificates)	0	8	6
#Program Level 1b (1-year certificates 9-29 hours)	0	0	0
#Program Level 1a (1-year certificates <9 hours)	0	0	0
#Undeclared	67	932	574

Table B2. All Degree/Certificate Seeking Undergraduate Students from the Fall Semester, AY 2021-22

	Student Parents	Non-Student Parents	No FAFSA
#Overall	2.8%	71.3%	25.9%
#Gender Male	22.3%	44.5%	55.9%
#Gender Female	77.3%	55.4%	44.0%
#Gender Non-Binary/Gender Other (if available)	0	0	0
#Gender Missing/Not Reported	0.4%	0.1%	0.1%
#Received MAP in Fall of AY2023-24	69.6%	48.7%	4.3%
#Race/Ethnicity African American/ Black	26.9%	15.0%	5.0%
#Race/Ethnicity American Indian, Alaska Native	0.4%	0.2%	0.1%
#Race/Ethnicity Asian	2.5%	11.8%	13.5%
#Race/Ethnicity Hispanic	18.7%	23.0%	8.6%
#Race/Ethnicity Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%
#Race/Ethnicity White	43.9%	44.6%	44.5%
#Race/Middle Eastern, North African (MENA)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
#Race/Ethnicity 2 or More Races	3.6%	3.8%	3.1%
#Race/Ethnicity Non Resident Alien	0.1%	0.2%	22.6%
#Race/Ethnicity Not Reported/ Missing	3.9%	1.5%	2.6%
#Enrollment Intensity FT (12 or more hours)	50.5%	92.0%	83.6%
#Enrollment Intensity PT (<12 hours)	49.5%	8.0%	16.1%
#Age at Fall Census Date <25	19.7%	93.0%	87.7%
#Age at Fall Census Date 25+	80.3%	7.1%	11.9%
#Program Level 5 (Bachelor's)	98.0%	98.7%	97.7%
#Program Level 4 (2-4 year certificates)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
#Program Level 3 (Associate)	0.0%	0.2%	0.4%
#Program Level 2 (1-2 year certificates)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
#Program Level 1b (1-year certificates 9-29 hours)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
#Program Level 1a (1-year certificates <9 hours)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
#Undeclared	1.9%	1.1%	1.8%

Table B3. Fall Semester GPA and Fall to Spring Retention (New FT/FT Degree/Certificate Seeking)

N of Student Parents* in Cohort (Y to Question 50)	313
Institution Specific*** Fall Semester Cumulative GPA (0.0-4.0 scale)	1.59
Number retained from Fall to Spring	238
Fall to Spring Retention (AY 2023-24) Rate	60.8%
N of Non-Student parents** in Cohort (N to Question 50)	25,151
Institution Specific*** Fall Semester Cumulative GPA (0.0-4.0 scale)	2.88
Number retained from Fall to Spring	23,047
Fall to Spring Retention (AY 2023-24) Rate	86.9%
N of Individuals with no FAFSA or no response to Question 50	3,487
Institution Specific*** Fall Semester Cumulative GPA (0.0-4.0 scale)	3.11
Number retained from Fall to Spring	3,149
Fall to Spring Retention (AY 2023-24) Rate	82.4%

* Based on Question 50 from the FY2023-24 FAFSA – Responded Yes to: Do you now have or will you have children who will receive more than half of their support from you between July 1, 2023 and June 30, 2024 (Y/N)?

**Based on Question 50 from the FY2023-24 FAFSA – Responded No to: Do you now have or will you have children who will receive more than half of their support from you between July 1, 2023 and June 30, 2024 (Y/N)?

***Based on courses from your institution. Do not include grades from coursework that was not taken at your institution (for example, dual credit).

Table B4. Marital Status

Parental Status	Marital Status			
	Married	Widowed or Divorced	Never Married	Not Reported/ No FAFSA
Student-Parents (with children)	710	158	969	1,287
Students without children	514	136	42,040	41,567
Total	1,224	294	43,009	46,172

Parental Status – Female Parents	Marital Status			
	Married	Widowed or Divorced	Never Married	Not Reported/ No FAFSA
Student-Parents (with children)	527	136	766	939
Students without children	338	88	24,048	22,131
Total	865	224	24,814	24,712

Parental Status – Male Parents	Marital Status			
	Married	Widowed or Divorced	Never Married	Not Reported/ No FAFSA
Student-Parents (with children)	182	22	143	337
Students without children	176	48	17,990	19,386
Total	358	70	18,133	21,399

Approximately 3.1 million students, or over one in five undergraduates in the U.S. higher education system, are Student-Parents (ACE 2023). These students balance the demands of raising children with pursuing postsecondary education. Student-Parents face significant obstacles such as financial challenges, time constraints, and negative interactions with higher education institutions, which contribute to their low persistence and degree acquisition rates compared to non-parenting students (Short et al. 2022; Cruse et al. 2019; Jez 2023).

Data shows that only 18% of Student-Parents earn a bachelor's or associate degree within six years, compared to 27 percent of independent and 54 percent of dependent non-parenting students (Cruse et al. 2021). This disparity highlights that Student-Parents are nearly twice as likely to drop out of higher education without a degree compared to students without children (Hicks and Anderson 2024). Degree completion rates also vary across gender and racial lines, with even lower rates for single student-mothers and Black and Latino student-fathers (Short et al. 2022; Contreras-Mendez and Cruse 2021; Dundar, Tighe, and Turner 2023; Hanson 2024).

Earning a bachelor's degree is critical for Student-Parents' financial stability, as single mothers with a bachelor's degree earn on average \$625,134 more over the course of their lifetimes than single mothers without a college credential (Short et al. 2022). Completing a degree not only decreases the likelihood of living in poverty for Student-Parents (Short et al. 2022) but also increases the chances that their children will attend and complete college and secure better career opportunities (Hicks and Anderson 2024; Anderson 2022).

Student-Parents are frequently women (74%), people of color (55%), and adult learners (88%) (ACE 2023). They often face financial challenges and basic needs insecurity (Cornett 2023). For example, 60% of Student-Parents experience housing insecurity, compared to 47% of students without dependents (Cornett 2023). Additionally, 31% of Student-Parents lived at or below the poverty line (NCES). The Student-Parent population is diverse, including various gender identities, races, socioeconomic statuses, and ages (ACE 2023; Turner and Dundar 2024; NCES 2020).

The difficulties Student-Parents face in higher education include financial struggles, time poverty, inaccessible childcare, and negative interactions with higher education institutions (Haleman 2004). Financial challenges are significant, with Student-Parents experiencing greater food and housing insecurity (CCSSE 2022) and higher education costs due to childcare and basic needs (Cornett 2023; Williams et al. 2022; Doorley, Elakbawy, and Dundar 2023; Dundar, Tighe, and Turner 2023). Many Student-Parents are unaware of or do not apply for financial aid (Beeler 2016; Jez 2023; Reed et al. 2021), further exacerbating their financial strain.

In recent years, a handful of states have begun to take legislative and policy-oriented approaches to address the needs of Student-Parents in higher education. These states, including Illinois, Texas, Oregon, California, and New York, they have recognized the importance of understanding and supporting this specific student population, which faces unique challenges in balancing academic pursuits with childcare and family responsibilities.

While these five states' strategies vary --ranging from data collection mandates to direct support interventions-- they collectively illustrate a growing awareness of the need for systemic change to better serve Student-Parents. Illinois's main contribution lies in its recent legislative push to mandate Student-Parent data collection within IBHE and ICCB, recognizing data as a crucial first step toward developing targeted support and services. While each state addresses the issue with a somewhat different emphasis, they collectively signal a growing recognition of the importance of understanding and supporting Student-Parents. Texas has mandated comprehensive data reporting by higher education institutions, which requires specific data on enrolled Student-Parents (Texas HB 1361) and offers a detailed view of this student population within the state. Oregon's Higher Education Coordinating Commission has developed inclusive definitions of parental status to improve data collection. California's efforts are geared towards policy advocacy and highlighting the financial challenges faced by Student-Parents. New York state has focused on direct intervention, increasing funding and childcare capacity at community colleges within the State University of New York system.

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